

## o 1988 - The Year in Review

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Every year about this time we pause to reflect on the major amateur radio and telecommunications happenings of the past twelve months. Technology, like time, never stands still. It is always in a state of change. We have just ended our tenth year of publishing THE W5YI REPORT. This issue starts Volume 11. As usual, there was good and bad news...there always is.

The Major Ham Radio News...

(1.) Last year's main event ...became the non-event of 1988. Novice Enhancement allowed entry level amateurs to sample high frequency and repeater operation ...and to link their computers via packet radio. It was thought that there would be a big surge in Novice operators. At first there was, but this turned out to merely be applicants beating the deadline for the old Novice requirements.

Not only are there less Novices now than two years ago, fewer applicants joined the ham ranks for the first time in FY 88 than in FY 89, the last full year prior to Novice Enhancement. The FCC's fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. (21,080 applicants became hams for the first time in FY 1988 versus 21,956 for FY86).

The good news is most amateur service growth is at the Technician level ...primarily because the old 50 question (Element 3) Tech exam has been separated into two 25 question tests. Element 3(A) became the lone requirement for the Technician Class. The high frequency oriented questions from the Element 3 pool became Element 3(B) ...and a prerequisite for the General Class.

Total amateur service growth this year stands at a scant 1.5%. Due to the establishment of ten year term ham tickets in January of 1984, 1988 was the last year that licensing figures indicated amateur radio growth. For five years (ending December 1993) there will be no renewals ...and no "drop outs". The FCC data base will only show amateurs being added to the service ...none deleted. It is expected that the amateur population will soar by 5% in 1989 - 3.5% of which is represented by those who would normally not have renewed their tickets! Some 15,000 amateurs dropped out of ham radio in 1987, ...13,000 in FY 1988. In five years, approximately 70,000 licensees will be carried on the FCC rolls that historically would have been purged from the FCC data base!

(2.) The number one ham story of 1988 was the reallocation of the 220-222 MHz band to narrow-band land mobile (business) operation. Although the fight for 220 is not yet over, amateurs as a whole were shocked over the inability of the ARRL to save the band for exclusive

ham use. Many amateurs were taken by surprise by the spectrum redistribution even though the Commission in 1983 clearly published (FCC 83-1; WARC-79 implementation) that it was indeed considering a fixed and/or mobile service allocation in the 220-225 MHz band.

In August, after accepting late-filed comments from United Parcel Service stating their intent to use the spectrum, the 220-222 MHz segment was reassigned to commercial interests. Few amateurs accepted the fact that the 220-225 MHz ham band had actually been on loan to them since WARC-79.

(3.) The Southern California Six Meter Club (SCSMC) in Cypress, CA, and the Southern California Repeater and Remote Base Association (SCRRBA) both petitioned to expand the six meter repeater subband by one megahertz to reduce TVI and alleviate congestion. Although expressing concerns for existing simplex and "Pacific DX window" operation, the FCC basically agreed and released an NPRM on November 14 proposing to extend the 52-54 MHz repeater subband down to 51-54 MHz. (Comments close on January 27, 1989).

(4.) A new Element 4B (required for the Extra Class license) question pool was released in March and implemented by all VEC's on November 1st.

(5.) A proposal (in response to an amateur petition) to permit "Instant Novice" operation was turned down by the FCC. The Commission ruled that the issuance of Novice licenses now is being handled in a more timely manner and "instant licensing" appears contrary to international law which requires verification of examinee qualifications prior to operation.

(6.) A joint Soviet/Canadian Transpolar Ski-Trek got underway on March 3rd aided by ham radio, sophisticated search-rescue satellites and the OSCAR-11 amateur satellite. The expedition skied from the Soviet Union over the North Pole to Canada and arrived on June 1st. It was followed by school children around the world who got their reports from amateur radio.

(7.) Coordination of amateur repeaters continued to be a problem with multiple coordinators - some self-appointed - assigning channels to identical spectrum in the same geographical area. Some disputes have ended up in the courts. Coordinators, as a whole, did not concur with the FCC's position which permits more than one coordinator for the same spectrum per region as long as both have amateur support. Opposing frequency coordinators could not agree among themselves on their assignments and the Commission left the feud for the amateur community to work out. An effort to redefine the term "frequency coordinator" failed in August.

(8.) During early 1988, Canada committed to restructuring their Amateur Radio Service. It will change their existing three "certificate" classes to a modular licensing set-up. The Amateur, Advanced and Digital Certificates will some become Certificate "A", "B", "C" and "D". "A" allows access to all ham spectrum (all modes/emissions) above 30 MHz when a written examination is passed covering regulations, procedures and basic theory. "B" allows all ham bands below 4 MHz and requires a 5 WPM telegraphy proficiency. Passing 12 WPM (Certificate "C") authorizes all ham bands below 30 MHz. Certificates "A", "B", and "C" permit 250 watts from commercially available transmitters. Certificate "D" requires advanced theory in exchange for the right of a Canadian amateur to build his own transmitter and radiate 1,000 watts. Implementation is expected during later summer/early fall of 1989.

(9.) The new year started out with a new Special Services Division Chief, Robert H. McNamara, overseeing the Personal Radio Branch of which the Amateur Radio Service is a part. Bob, previously the Aviation/Marine Branch Chief, replaced Ray Kowalski who left the FCC after 19 years to accept a position with a private Washington, DC communications law firm. Kowalski has been retained by a coalition of amateurs, publishers and industry to assist with the restructuring of the amateur service at the entry level similar to that of Canada.

(10.) Still no action on privatizing the issuance of ham call signs - even though the FCC staff completed their work on the matter nearly a year ago! The big decision is still "do we want to do it at all?" The FCC proposed in PRB-3 to appoint an SCSC (Special Call Sign Coordinator) to issue secondary call signs of choice to the amateur community. Several ham groups have applied to handle the program.

(11.) Uniden Corporation (at year beginning) and Radio Shack (at year end) entered the ham radio equipment business with newly introduced ten meter transceivers - both manufactured by Uniden-Japan. Uniden's distribution pipeline consists of wholesalers who primarily sell the non-amateur market and many of the radios fell into unlicensed hands.

Uniden made a decision at year end to fully encapsulate the microprocessor and PLL (frequency determining) circuitry in epoxy so that the radios could not be easily modified to operate outside of the amateur ten meter band. Any modified radios returned to the factory for service will be restored to the original condition and encapsulated. Production of the transceiver will soon change from Taiwan to the Phillipines, we were told. New 1989 production of the HR-2510 will contain a 100-kHz offset so amateurs can operate through ten meter FM repeaters, all sub-audible tones, and scanning will be at 5 kHz increments instead of 10. The characteristic "beep" at the

end of each transmission will also be eliminated. Uniden plans to introduce more amateur equipment in 1989 in an attempt to capture a piece of the legitimate ham market.

(12.) In March, the FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to streamline and clarify its Part 97 Amateur Radio Service Rules. Comments closed in November. The new rules, if adopted, make several changes to the rules. Amateurs particularly objected to the provision that would permit the FCC to order any amateur causing interference off the air regardless of the cause.

(13.) AMSAT's Phase 3C OSCAR 13 was launched during early June and became an improved version of OSCAR 10. It included a satellite based packet radio system in a highly elliptical orbit.

(14.) In May, the FCC launched license revocation proceedings against eleven amateurs in Puerto Rico accused of participating in various schemes to obtain amateur radio operator licenses by fraudulent means.

(15.) We were one of the first to report on parasitic viruses, self-replicating "time bomb" programs designed to destroy software, became the new threat to computer users everywhere ...including the Department of Defense.

(16.) The "good old days of DX" returned as Sunspot Cycle 22 continued its upward climb amid speculation that it could set a 250 year sunspot record covering 23 eleven year cycles dating all the way back to 1729.

(17.) At mid-year, a series of unfortunate incidents befell Wayne Green/W2NSD, publisher of 73 Magazine. In rapid succession, his Editor-in-Chief resigned in a huff, the Associated Press circulated an article about Green's activities - at least partially uncomplimentary, and his ex-wife's lawyer husband published a highly unflattering book aimed at alerting the public about Wayne and his Vice Presidential candidacy.

(18.) In September, the FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking aimed at authorizing General and higher class ham operators access to the 17 meter WARC band. The first 42 kHz segment of the 18.068-18.168 MHz band would be allocated to telegraphy/digital emissions. More than 50 nations already permit their amateurs to operate in the 17 meter band. The ARRL asked for faster access than the planned July 1, 1989.

(19.) Maritime radio operators on the high seas are slated to become a thing of the past as world shipping leaders agreed to phase them

out starting in 1993. Telegraphy knowledge will no longer be a requirement on ocean-going vessels as high-technology automatic satellite positioning and distress systems take over. An ARRL survey is also underway among its membership to take a look at the importance of the Morse code requirement as a prerequisite for access to any of the ham bands.

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